

REP. WILSON BACKS BIPARTISAN BILL TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE FOR 11 MILLION CHILDREN

This Legislation Could Provide more than 350,000 Uninsured Children in Ohio With Health Care Coverage

Bill on its way to President Obama

Washington, D.C. – Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) today joined a majority in the House of Representatives in support of the final version of bipartisan legislation to provide health care to 11 million children in modest-income families. The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act was approved by a vote of 290-135. Passage by the House today sent the bill to President Obama's desk for his signature. President Obama will sign the bill later this afternoon.

"I fought for this legislation since coming to Congress in 2007," Wilson said. "This is the same legislation that President Bush vetoed twice in the last Congress. I am so proud that, at last, we can expand health coverage for our children."

"This is one step closer to being able to provide every child in our nation with affordable, high-quality health care," Wilson said. "It just makes good common sense that by improving the health of children we'll improve their chance for success. In addition, we'll reduce the much more expensive use of emergency rooms for primary care."

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too little to afford health insurance for their children themselves but too much to qualify for Medicaid. This bill will give states the resources and incentives necessary to reach and cover millions of uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid.

This bipartisan bill reauthorizes the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) through FY 2013. It preserves the coverage for all 7.1 million children currently covered by SCHIP, including preserving the coverage of 231,538 children in Ohio. It also provides coverage for 4.1 million uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid, including up to 119,000 children in Ohio.

The bill is fully paid for – raising the tobacco tax by 62 cents. Raising the tobacco tax also promotes children's health – by discouraging children from smoking. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a 62-cent increase in the tobacco tax means that nearly 1.9 million fewer children will take up smoking.

"In our current economic situation, with rising unemployment, this children's health bill is critical," Wilson said. "With parents losing employer-sponsored health care for their children, the need for this common sense legislation grows every day."